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ABSTRACT

The traditional educational role of speech communication is too narrow to encompass recent contributions to speech communication and the increasing recognition that communication is central to the teaching/learning process. This paper first redefines speech communication education as the study of the process of speech communication in instructional settings and the development of speech communication competencies in prospective and practicing teachers. The paper then explores two goals of speech communication education (to generate productive theories and to encourage the development of effective speech communication competencies and the improved use of speech communication in instructional settings), identifies specific directions for implementation, and offers suggestions for research possibilities, curricular offerings, and service functions which could be the basis for continued development. (JM)

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SPEECH COMMUNICATION EDUCATION:

A BROADENED PERSPECTIVE

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Speech Communication Education: A Broadened Perspective

In his 1971 Presidential Message to the Speech Communication Association, William S. Howell urged the discipline to ask "who needs us?" and "what are we doing to help?"[1] In 1973 SCA President Samuel Becker argued similarly that the discipline needs to determine "who we are, what this field, and hence, this Association are about, what our central core is or should be."[2] And in 1976, SCA President Lloyd F. Bitzer called for a general examination of SCA's structure and objectives and announced that this year's convention theme, "Check-up," offered an opportunity to assess the progress and goals of the Association.[3] Perhaps nowhere has such an assessment been taken more seriously than in Speech Communication Education. American education has undergone dramatic change in the last decade, and recent developments in Speech Communication Education indicate that the area is pursuing new directions in a vigorous effort to become more responsive to the demands and opportunities of a rapidly changing educational scene.[4] If, however, Speech Communication Education is to continue to make a substantive contribution to the discipline and to American education, we believe the area must be viewed from a clearly defined and broadened perspective.

Historical Perspective of Speech Communication Education

Historically, Speech Communication Education was concerned with teacher training and curricular development. As teacher training programs grew, Speech Communication instruction grew. The percentage of high schools offering courses in speech, for example, increased from under ten per cent in the thirties to eighty to ninety per cent by 1970.[5] Speech Communication educators pointed to this growth as evidence of a significant contribution made to American education by the area. Certainly no one can dispute this claim.

During this period of growth, however, Speech Communication Education was typically defined as "teaching and learning to teach speech."[6] That definition encourages the area's scholars to maintain limited teaching and research perspectives and communicated an ambiguous message to colleagues and observers outside the area by equating Speech Communication Education with instruction in speech, limiting the area's focus to teacher education, and suggesting that the area provide essentially a service function to the rest of the discipline. This amorphous view of Speech Communication Education existed (and to some extent continues to exist) in part because of the ubiquitous nature of the area. All teachers of speech communication, in effect, are speech educators, but of course, not all speech communication teachers are specialists in Speech Communication Education. All speech communication teachers, in other words, are not obliged to conduct research requisite to effective theory building in instructional communication, nor to build speech communication curricula based on such theories, nor to assume the primary responsibility for teacher education in speech communication. But it is the responsibility of specialists in Speech Communication Education to engage in all these endeavors. In short, the traditional perspective of the area no longer adequately represents the significant contributions Speech Communication Education is making in speech communication and to education.

Changing Perspective of Speech Communication Education

In recent years, American education has been severely criticized. The target of many contemporary critics has been the state of communication between teachers and students, teachers and administrators, teachers and parents, and among instructors themselves. Concern for quality communication in instructional environments and the conviction that communication is central to the teaching-learning process has not been provincial testimony as to its importance is

voluminous. Works by Silberman, Goodman, Kozol, Holt, Ashton-Warner, Postman and Weingartner and others vigorously criticize the quality of the communication process existing in instructional environments.[7]

Many educators have responded to this criticism by attempting to develop more interactive learning experiences. As a result the contemporary instructional scene has undergone a dramatic transformation. In most classrooms today, elements of the teaching-learning process are quite different from those of the past. Innovative communication based teaching-learning strategies have greatly altered instructional environments. The role of the instructor is rapidly changing from dispenser of information to manager of the teaching-learning process. This new role requires of the instructor communication competencies far beyond the traditional concerns of voice, articulation and information organization. While the success of these attempts to enrich the educational experiences of students remains to be determined, it is evident that classrooms have become more "open," that interaction between students and instructors and among students is an important element of this transition, and that communication between instructors and learners has been permanently altered.

There is evidence that Speech Communication Education has responded to these challenges. The Memphis Conference of Teacher Educators in Speech Communication demonstrated that Speech Communication Education is emerging as a strong scholarly element within the Speech Communication discipline. As William Work said of the Memphis Conference, it "symbolized a 'coming of age' for speech communication education. It reflected the increased sophistication that has characterized our research and pedagogy during the past decade. It mirrored the strengthened recognition that this branch of our discipline has earned in the broad family of the communication arts and sciences."[8] The creation of the Instructional Development Division within the Speech Communication Association; the appointment of an

Associate Executive Secretary for Education in SCA; the newly formed States Advisory Council sponsored by SCA; and state, regional, and national conventions and special conferences are additional indications of the emerging stature of the area of Speech Communication Education.

These developments have enabled us to look beyond the traditional concerns of the area and to be more responsive to the problems and challenges of contemporary education. Our contention is that if Speech Communication Education is to continue its development, the area must be viewed from a broadened perspective and to that end we offer an expanded definition of the area, a refocusing and clarification of the goals, and proposals for continued growth.

Broadened Perspective of Speech Communication Education

Definition of Speech Communication Education

Speech Communication Education can be defined as the study of the process of speech communication in instructional settings, and the development of speech communication competencies in prospective and practicing teachers. Our concept of instructional settings includes classrooms kindergarten through graduate school, non-classroom educational contexts at these levels, and instructional environments in business, government and industry. This broader definition more accurately reflects the current concerns of Speech Communication Education and allows the area to be more responsive to the demands of contemporary education than does the "teaching and learning to teach speech" perspective.

This definition of Speech Communication Education is based on two assumptions. First, quality of learning is directly affected by quality of speech communication between instructors and students. Quality communication in the classroom is approached when students and instructors begin to form a cohesive group of interacting individuals in which participation is spontaneous and leader-

ship can be shared. Essential to quality communication in instructional environments is the instructor's sensitivity to the verbally and nonverbally expressed needs of the students and the students' freedom and willingness to communicate at both cognitive and affective levels to satisfy intellectual and social needs. The classroom in which quality communication is the norm is characterized by trust, freedom of expression, verbal inquiry and the clear presentation of information which contributes to academic achievement and personal satisfaction.

Second, instructional communication can be distinguished from other communication in at least four ways: by the contexts, the communicators, the evaluative climate, and the presence of a constant overload of information.[9] Although similarities exist between business, government, and family communication and communication which takes place in educational environments, we believe that instructional communication has several distinguishing characteristics. Only when prospective teachers analyze instructional communication in terms of its distinctiveness can they most effectively develop communication behaviors which fulfill the unique communication requirements they face.

This view of Speech Communication Education argues not only that we continue the tasks of discovering, developing, and disseminating information related to the improvement of instruction in speech communication classrooms but that the area becomes fundamentally committed to the improvement of communication as a medium of teaching and learning in all instructional settings.

Goals of Speech Communication Education

Based on this view of Speech Communication Education, the goals of the area should be to:

1. generate productive theories through research on

   the variables of the speech communication process which relate most directly to teaching and learning, and

the characteristics of instructional settings most conducive to the effective uses of the speech communication process, and

2. encourage the development of effective speech communication competencies and the improved use of speech communication in instructional settings through

substantive pre-service education which includes innovative curricula and extended classroom experiences, and

in-service education which provides teachers in the field opportunities to develop new competencies and alternative strategies in response to education change.

Implementation of Goals

These goals suggest that Speech Communication Education must focus its effort on theory building research, pre-service education programs, and appropriate in-service programs for educators. These components are interrelated; the component of primary importance in any particular speech communication department will, of course, depend upon the specific goals of the department, available resources, and expertise of the faculty.

Theory Building and Research. Research in Speech Communication Education must investigate a broad range of variables related to communication in teaching and learning and the development of speech communication competencies in teachers and students.[10] Both descriptive and empirical research should be undertaken to specify the communication competencies required of teachers and students as they employ the more recently developed instructional strategies including individualized and self-paced instruction, team teaching, audio-video-tutorial based instruction, instructional media, games and simulations, and small instructional groups as well as the more traditional strategies associated with information dispensing and group discussion. Studies must also clarify which classroom environments provide for the most effective use of specific communication strategies and patterns. Analysis of the physical characteristics of instructional settings

including the arrangement of students, size of the class, and proxemics needs to be made before the appropriate speech communication strategy can be adapted for a selected instructional setting. These findings must then be translated into specific speech communication competencies needed by all instructors and instructional experiences must be designed to facilitate the development of these competencies.

The acquisition of language and the development and utilization of complex speech structures by children and youth is of major interest to Speech Communication Education. Research in this area in cooperation with our colleagues in speech and hearing, linguistics, and education should focus on the sequential acquisition and development of capacities for oral communication from infancy through adolescence. Investigations should also identify those variables (intellectual ability, biological capacity, linguistic environment, socio-economic background) which significantly influence the development of speech communication in the young.

Speech Communication Educators must also examine specific aspects of instruction in speech communication classrooms. The increasing concern for accountability and the "back to basics" movement have significant implications for the teacher of speech communication. Systematic approaches to instruction including the development and reasonable application of instructional objectives and the construction of valid and reliable instruments to measure student communication competencies must continue to be tested and evaluated. Research must also undertake to identify and validate the hierarchial learning structure of speech communication behaviors and attitudes. Current taxonomies must be modified or new ones developed to guide and assess student growth in speech communication.

Essential to generating productive theories is the need to establish priorities and coordinate our research efforts. Speech Communication Education must not only be committed to solving immediate instructional communication problems

but must prepare to contribute to future educational innovations. As Newcombe and Allen state, "teacher educators must look to more than the present. They must introduce their students to the dimensions of change in the fields of speech communication and instructional theory which hold the greatest promise for the schools of tomorrow."[11] Research and theory building priorities must be assessed against projections of not only what is possible and probable but what are the preferable communication competencies required of the youth of tomorrow.

Finally, there is an overwhelming need for considerable "in house" research. The status of speech communication instruction at all levels of education, kindergarten through graduate school, must be thoroughly surveyed and described. Specifically, we need to determine the extent and availability of speech communication courses, and the certification requirements of those teaching speech communication courses.

Pre-Service Education. Prospective and practicing instructors in other disciplines and at all levels in education, government, business and industry need courses in classroom communication theory and skills. Instruction and experience are needed in developing questioning strategies; facilitating interpersonal communication between students and instructors; establishing interactive classroom climates; listening responsively; presenting information, opinions ideas and directions; leading instructional discussions; managing small learning groups; utilizing interaction analysis tools; and assessing socio-economic, cultural, and sub-cultural classroom communication. In short, the instructor's communication competencies should reflect as closely as possible the latest information we have about effective instructional communication.

The undergraduate curriculum for prospective elementary teachers could focus on communication acquisition and development, language acquisition and development, imaginative and discursive use of language, message patterns and their impact,

environmental and cultural influences on speech communication and the relationship of Speech Communication to the broader language arts field. Training in these areas would assist the teacher in understanding and developing specific communication competencies in children.

Areas of academic preparation for prospective majors and minors at the secondary level should include the study of language and communication systems, rhetorical theory, intra- and interpersonal communication, small group processes, oral interpretation of literature, career communication, public address, argumentation and debate, and forensic activities. Such training would enable prospective secondary teachers to select from a broad background and to integrate subject matter appropriate for their secondary students.[12]

Ideally, students majoring in Speech Communication Education at both the elementary and secondary levels should have a broad knowledge of the various humanistic and scientific components of the speech communication discipline. In addition, Speech Communication Education majors need to be familiar with the historical development of education, current educational philosophy, and contemporary educational trends and practices. Prospective teachers must also have a command of the principles of human growth and development and the techniques for assessing such development. While colleges and departments of education can provide training in the broader aspects of educational theory and philosophy, Speech Communication Education must assume the responsibility for the specialized task of developing appropriate pedagogical competencies in speech communication teachers.

This task may be achieved through a methodology course or courses taught by the Speech Communication Education faculty. The methodology course in Speech Communication Education needs to include the study of the teaching-learning process in speech communication and the development of pedagogical competencies. Students should be acquainted with and able to adapt to a variety of educational environments

including large lecture, small groups, contract learning, autotutorial, etc. Prospective speech communication teachers must be skilled questioners, effective discussion leaders, and articulate lecturers. They must also be able to stimulate, reinforce, and encourage the effective development of speech communication competencies in students. Speech communication teachers must be able to design curricula, state goals, specify objectives, devise strategies, and assess student learning in speech communication classrooms. Methodology courses must provide practical and valuable experiences for the future teachers of speech communication at all levels; these courses must be responsive to the behaviors required of teachers in the "real" classroom.

There is, perhaps, no other educational opportunity as potentially valuable for prospective teachers as the field experience, commonly referred to as student teaching or internship. Among its important aspects are placement, amount of time in the field, active involvement, supervision, and evaluation. The field experience needs to provide enough time for the student teacher to complete three phases: observation, instructional assistance, and actual teaching. During these three phases, the student teacher must be able to assess the total teaching community to which he/she aspires, to "try on" the full responsibilities of teaching, both inside and outside of the classroom, and to make a decision as to his/her career commitment to teaching. The teaching community, on the other hand, must have ample time in which to assess the student teacher's competence and to make a professional decision as to the candidate's potential for classroom teaching.

Speech Communication Education must also provide input into graduate programs in speech communication. Currently, although most speech communication graduate students plan to pursue teaching careers, they receive little, if any, training in pedagogy for the college and university educational environments where they will eventually be employed. The frequent cry of college/university faculty members in all disciplines is that while they have acquired adequate knowledge and research

capabilities, they know little about teaching. Even those who have held teaching assistantships during their graduate days complain of a lack of competency. Courses designed to provide knowledge and skill in instructional communication appropriate for the college/university or other adult educational environments should be an integral part of all graduate programs in speech communication and should be developed by Speech Communication Education faculty.

Advanced degree programs with a major emphasis in Speech Communication Education are also needed. The Master of Arts program which provides an in-depth study of the speech communication field and which concentrates on the development and application of pedagogical theories and methods to teaching speech communication could improve quality of Speech Communication instruction at all levels. The Doctor of Philosophy degree in Speech Communication Education should be based on pedagogical research with emphasis on the analysis and improvement of the teaching-learning process and the discovery and development of new theories of speech communication in instructional settings.

Service Functions. The final component of Speech Communication Education consists of service functions. Services which can be provided by Speech Communication Education include curricular and course design consultation, development of innovative communication based teaching strategies, instructional media development, and specialized courses and programs in instructional communication designed for prospective teachers in the speech communication field and others in instructional positions in business and government.[13]

Conclusion

The increasing recognition that communication is central to the teaching-learning process in contemporary instructional environments requires Speech Communication to continue to reassess its role in education. We believe Speech Communication Education specialists must take seriously the obligation to

discover and develop instructional communication theories as well as to provide continued leadership in the improvement of speech communication instruction and curricular development.

We have attempted, therefore, to redefine Speech Communication Education, to focus and clarify the goals of the area, and to identify specific directions for implementation. We have offered suggestions for research possibilities, curricular offerings, and service functions which we feel could be the basis for continued development. Such a broadened perspective of Speech Communication Education is necessary to insure a meaningful response to the demands of a rapidly changing educational scene.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Spectra, February, 1972, p. 6.

[2]Spectra, February, 1974, p. 1.

[3]Spectra, February, 1976, p. 2.

[4]See P. Judson Newcombe and R.R. Allen, eds., New Horizons for Teacher Education in Speech Communication (Illinois: National Textbook Company, 1974), for a discussion of current directions in Speech Communication Education.

[5]See William D. Brooks, "The Status of Speech in Secondary Schools: A Summary of State Studies," The Speech Teacher, 18 (November 1969), pp. 276-281 and Donald K. Orban, "A Survey of Speech Education in the Public Senior High Schools of the United States, 1969-1970." Diss. Indiana University 1973 for further information.

[6]Charles L. Balcher and Hugh F. Seabury, Teaching Speech in Today's Secondary Schools (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965), p. 2.

[7]See Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom (New York: Random House, Inc., 1970); Paul Goodman, Compulsory Mis-Education (New York: Horizon Press, 1964); Jonathan Kozol, Death at an Early Age (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967); Herbert Kohl, 36 Children (New York: New American Library, 1967); John Holt, The Underachieving School (New York: Pitman, 1969); Sylvia Ashton-Warner, Teacher (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963); and Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, Teaching as a Subversive Activity (New York: Delacorte, 1969).

[8]New Horizons, viii.

[9]James L. Booth and Jody L. Nyquist, "Communication in Educational Environments: A Basic Course," Association for Communication Administration Bulletin, 18 (October 1976), pp. 54-76.

[10]See New Horizons, pp. 53-60 for a discussion of research trends in Speech Communication Education and chapter 4 for specific research proposals.

[11]New Horizons, p. 2.

[12]Elizabeth Norwood, "A Rationale for Effective Teacher Education in Speech Communication," The Speech Teacher, 24 (March 1975), pp. 169-171.

[13]Andrew D. Wolvin, "In-Service Education: New Dimensions for Speech Communication Education," The Speech Teacher, 23 (November 1974), pp. 330-336.